

4: Villa Rojas E-4,5 (1938-1944) 1969 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

Oxchuc

TABLE 3—DOMESTIC COMPOSITION

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	Number	Percentage
Nuclear Families:		
Man, wife, no children	4	8.2
Man, wife, children	19	38.8
Man, 2 wives, no children	1	2.0
Man, 2 wives, children	5	10.2
Widow, children	2	4.1
Man, wife, children not own	2	4.1
	33	67.4
Extended Families:		
Man, wife, married son and wife	6	12.2
Man, wife, married daughter	2	4.1
Widow, married son	6	12.2
Widow, married daughter	1	2.0
Man, wife, married son, and married grandson	1	2.0
	16	32.5

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[P 216-A]

- 000 596 throughout the region. There are also compound families in which other members, married or widowed, from the same patrilineal nucleus, plus their children, share the same house or the same kitchen.

[129] Table 3, taken from J. Nash (1959, p. 2), was compiled from data gathered in Oxchuc parajes, where we had our headquarters.

Of the 16 extended families, 13 are formed by married sons living in the parents' house; the married daughters living with their parents derive from the custom that the son-in-law spends a period of service in his father-in-law's house during the first months of marriage.

- 592 These types of family composition continue even in acculturated communities like Aguacaténango. According to B. Metzger (1959, p. 8), of the 174 homes that constitute this village, 121 are nuclear and 53 are extended families; of the latter, 15 are formed by parents living with their married sons and 10 are formed by widows living with an unmarried son. There are only two instances of parents who live in an unmarried daughter's house. Married brothers very seldom live in the same house.

- 000 Though the nuclear family predominates, [P.216-C]

242 *Soil characteristics.* The potential productivity of flat irrigated lands is evaluated on the basis of two criteria: color of the soil and consistency of the soil. The preferred land for cultivation is the black loam mixed with some sand, (*?ihk'al hi?iletik lum*). The better, quicker growing corn seed is planted here. These very productive soils are called "hot" lands (*k'ilin lum*). (Heat is associated with fertility in both lands and people: a pregnant woman and her husband are considered to be in a state of heat, and the contrast state of being cold is attributed to someone who is sterile.) The red (*tzab'alum*) yellow (*k'analum*), and white soils (*sak lum*) are poorer soils and the slower seed is planted here. These soils are considered "cold" (*sik*) and are thought to be "tired."

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[842] The loss of soil productivity is attributed either to the loss of the soul of the crop or to the fact that the soil gets "tired." Farmers have noticed that [774] in the first five years of planting in Tulanca, the ejido land grant, the soil was "hot" and gave good crops. When this productivity was lost, people said the soul of the crop left. It is considered dangerous to start crops in the lower lands of hot country because when the location of crops is changed, the soul leaves its original residence. The notion of crop soul loss does not conflict with the awareness of natural causes of soil productivity. Fields are left fallow for four or five years when productivity diminishes and the soil is "tired." The irrigated lands are in continuous use because there is some replenishment of fertility with the overflow of the ditch waters. Cattle fertilizers are used sporadically. Those who have many head of cattle construct corrals into which they herd the cattle each night. The location of the corral is changed yearly. Corn and beans are then planted in [233] the old corral with superior results. The dozen or so corrals in the town are owned and worked cooperatively by extended families and are referred to by the Indian patronyms—for example, *skoral Linetik* (corral of the Lins) or *skoral Čailetik* (corral of the Čailes). The one attempt to use [536]
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[551] commercial fertilizers provided by the Ejido Bank proved a technical success but an administrative failure (chapter 3). Indians noted the increased [177] yields, but none have attempted to purchase fertilizers.

Soil consistency is evaluated on the basis of how easy it is to work. Wet, sticky, or clayey soil (*futilium*) and stony soil (*kelilum*) are least desirable. Sandy soil is easier to work, but soil productivity depends on a loam

621 Moreover, he can more easily ⁵⁴

624 fulfill these requisites if he had been able in his lifetime to
554 become the jural head of a large and united extended family, be-
596 cause, given the fact that he should be able to control the opin-
ions and actions of many villagers, it is his personal power with
other individuals which supports his position as principal, and
not the reverse.

621 Town officials, although they are selected by the previous
[623] officers and approved by the principales, have to be ratified in
their positions by all the household heads in a public meeting.
The different qualifications of some men for the higher posts
creates some disparity in the number of cargos held by a particular
individual, but the differences are never enough to say that polit-
ical power is differentially distributed. The following table and
figure show the distribution of officerships by age group, in a
random sample of married men in Aguacatenango, and it confirms the
idea that the villagers themselves have about their access to po-
litical officership: any normal, married man with more than one
child is capable of achieving, in a hierarchical order, several
political posts.¹

[184] ¹This system is in contrast with other villages in the
area. In the very large communities with paraje type settlements
(a nucleated village which functions as a ceremonial and political
center surrounded by dispersed hamlets) such as Tenejapa or
Zinacantan, although the number of offices is tremendously increased,
the population is so large that only a few men from each paraje
pass the cargos, and the ideal of every man participating in the
hierarchy of power is never attained. In those cases, only the
richer obtain office, and the "democratic" aspects of the system
are less noticeable. It could be that an egalitarian political or-
ganization can only be maintained when the population size is lim-
ited, and that a large social group with a centralized organization
"needs" differential power distribution, or, rather, cannot avoid
the differential distribution of political power among the popula-
tion groups.